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Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 64/133 of 18 December 2009. The report is divided into four sections. Section II highlights the issues addressed by the above-mentioned resolution, including confronting family poverty; promoting intergenerational solidarity; reconciling work and family life; and collecting national and regional data on family well-being. Section III focuses on the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The report briefly reviews human rights instruments and outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits as they relate to the family, it examines their relevance and importance for maintaining focus on the family, and it identifies the issues in need of renewed attention and action to guide preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. Section III also offers suggestions on the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at the international, regional and national levels. The last section puts forward conclusions and recommendations.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 64/133 on Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond, requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, through the Commission for Social Development at its forty-ninth session and the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the above-mentioned resolution and on the appropriate ways and means to observe the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in 2014.

2. The unanimous proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family was in recognition of the importance families play in social development. Focusing on families offered a comprehensive, people-centred perspective on development issues that are routinely approached from a sectoral policy or social group point of view. The theme of the International Year: "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world" called attention to both the rights and responsibilities of family members and the economic and social processes affecting those rights and responsibilities.

3. As basic and essential building blocks of societies, families have a crucial role in social development. They bear the primary responsibility for the education and socialization of children as well as instilling values of citizenship and belonging in the society. Families provide material and non-material care and support to its members, from children to older persons or those suffering from illness, sheltering them from hardship to the maximum possible extent.

4. The social protection function performed by families is especially important in times of increased uncertainty and vulnerability. Families find it more and more difficult, however, to fulfil these multiple roles and tackle all responsibilities entrusted, either traditionally or by default, to them. As extended family networks get smaller owing to changes in living arrangements and family size, families struggle to fulfil their mutual obligations towards all family members, young and old. Furthermore, rapid socio-economic transformations, often combined with the eroding capacity of the State to protect households from their negative impacts through social policy interventions, leave a large number of families poor and vulnerable.

5. Over the years, the international community has recognized both the importance of families for the achievement of development goals and the challenges families face and the assistance they need to overcome them. The objectives of the International Year of the Family have helped to provide overall guidance for national efforts benefiting families. The body of human rights instruments compelled Governments to protect families and their individual members. The outcomes of major conferences acknowledged the role of families and addressed areas of special concern. General Assembly resolutions and Secretary-General's reports submitted in response to them focused on challenges and opportunities faced by families and recommended specific actions to make the family both a participant and a beneficiary of development efforts.

6. Although the international community shares a global concern over the future of the family and its role in development, a long-term plan of action for families, like those for youth or older persons, has not been developed. This has been partly because of the lack of consensus on the definition of the family and other family-

sensitive considerations in the development and implementation of family-oriented policies.

7. The recent Millennium Development Summit outcome document (General Assembly resolution 65/1) does not mention the family, except in the context of family planning. Yet, the majority of the Millennium Development targets, especially those relating to the reduction of poverty, education of children and reduction in maternal mortality, are difficult to attain unless the strategies to achieve them focus on the family.

8. Although there is no explicit family framework at the international level, many Governments recognize families as agents of development and actively pursue family-oriented social policies at the national level. In fact, over the years specific family-friendly policies have gained ground. Among them, non-contributory social transfer programmes, including conditional cash transfers, targeting mostly poor families, have become a core element of poverty reduction strategies in many developing countries. Such interventions have been credited with a reduction in the intergenerational transmission of poverty and better educational and health outcomes for children. These positive outcomes led to the growing popularity of similar programmes and demonstrated the value of focusing on family-centred policies to achieve development goals.

9. Notwithstanding national efforts, at the international level the family is appreciated but not prioritized in development efforts. The very contribution of families to the achievement of development goals continues to be largely overlooked, while there seems to be a consensus on the fact that, so far, the stability and cohesiveness of communities and societies largely rest on the strength of the family.

10. In effect, the very achievement of development goals depends on how well families are empowered to contribute to the achievement of those goals. Thus, policies focusing on improving the well-being of families are certain to benefit development. Such policies should not only help families to cope with their numerous responsibilities and shelter them from vulnerability; they should aim at supporting a variety of family functions rather than replacing them and treating families as collections of individuals, who independently need support.

11. The upcoming anniversary of the International Year of the Family offers an opportunity to add a family focus to development efforts with the objective of strengthening them as agents of development for the benefit of the society at large.

12. The present report focuses on four areas of relevance to the family noted by the General Assembly in resolution 64/133: confronting family poverty; promoting intergenerational solidarity; reconciling work and family life; and collecting national and regional data on family well-being. The report further addresses those issues in the context of the three objectives of the World Summit for Social Development — poverty eradication, employment and decent work and social integration — as a basis for the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

13. The report also provides a concise overview of family-related provisions from major human rights instruments and outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits and puts forward a draft framework for the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. Proposed suggestions include activities at international, regional and national levels to raise

awareness of the role of the family in development and support families in performing their societal and developmental functions.

II. Follow-up to the International Year of the Family

Issues and policy responses

14. Recent discussions on issues affecting families tend to centre on confronting family poverty, supporting intergenerational solidarity and reconciling work and family life. In turn, policy responses to those issues involve family-focused social policies, such as social protection mechanisms; specific programmes to address intergenerational relations and measures to assist families with children in balancing their work and family life. The collection of reliable data on family well-being to inform results-based policymaking is also a subject of increased attention by policymakers and practitioners. A brief overview of the importance of focusing on these issues and examples of policy responses relating to them follows.

A. Confronting family poverty

15. In its resolution 64/133, the General Assembly encouraged Member States to adopt holistic approaches to policies and programmes confronting family poverty and social exclusion. The Assembly noted the importance of family-oriented and gender- and child-sensitive social protection policies in addressing family poverty and reducing the vulnerability of younger and older generations. Such policies have been increasingly mainstreamed in the overall development efforts.

16. Family-focused social transfer programmes in developing countries link cash transfers with basic service provisions. Brazil's Bolsa Família and Mexico's Oportunidades offer income supplements to families living in poverty provided that they send their children to school and ensure health check-ups. Other programmes provide income benefits for households working in local infrastructure development. Paid employment is guaranteed by the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India and through the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia. Chile Solidario is an integrated anti-poverty programme where cash transfers are combined with interventions in employment, health, education and housing.

17. Conditional cash transfers target families living in poverty. They differ in the coverage, programme design and context in which they operate. They range in coverage from 11 million families in Brazil to 215,000 in Chile, to pilot programmes with a few thousand families in Kenya and Nicaragua. They cover 40 per cent of the population in Ecuador, about 20 per cent in Brazil and Mexico and just 1 per cent of the population in Cambodia. In terms of expenditure, the costs range from about 0.50 per cent of GDP in Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico to 0.08 per cent of GDP in Chile. The level of the benefit varies from 20 per cent of mean household consumption in Mexico to 4 per cent in Honduras, and lower amounts for programmes in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Pakistan.[1]

[1] A. Fiszbein and N. Schady, *Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty* (World Bank, 2009).

18. All programmes seek to reduce poverty and vulnerability. Beneficiaries are mostly in poor or the poorest households with children. Focus on children aims at halting the intergenerational transfer of poverty, keeping them in school and reducing child labour.

19. Research demonstrates that family-oriented social protection programmes proved to be effective in shielding families from the negative effects of economic shocks, reducing their vulnerabilities and preventing them from slipping further into poverty.[2] The programmes improve nutrition, access to health and the overall health status of beneficiaries. Social protection schemes targeting families also allow them to make proper investments in their children's education helping to prevent intergenerational transfer of poverty. Conditional cash transfers improve school attendance and performance. According to the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, "While cash transfers enable families to absorb the costs associated with schooling, other programmes, such as school feeding programmes or initiatives that provide fee waivers or subsidies for low-income families with children, also appear to be associated with higher school attendance levels" (A/65/259, para. 25). Research also shows that family access to social protection benefits like unemployment and disability benefits reduces child labour.[3] Findings from Colombia's Familias en Acción, Peru's Juntos, Chile's Chile Solidario, Nicaragua's Red de Protección Social, Mexico's Oportunidades, and South Africa's Old Age and Disability Grant confirm that social transfers have an important role in improving preventive health practices for the benefit of mothers and infants.

20. Cash and in kind transfers may help families and individuals to protect their productive assets or invest in such assets and establish income-generating activities (see A/65/259, para. 18). However, the resulting improvement in the lives of the recipients is often limited and rarely provides a pathway out of poverty.

21. Many social protection programmes are gender-sensitive, recognizing the role of women in care provision. At the same time, efforts should be made to avoid stereotyping and discrimination and promote the value of all types of work, including home care for both men and women. There is also a need for more programmes involving men to support and provide care for family members. It is equally important to ensure that programmes are designed to address unequal decision-making powers within families.

22. The effective delivery of social transfer programmes is predicated on an efficient administrative structure and an adequate financial capacity. Middle-income countries are mostly able to carry out such programmes to scale. Most low-income countries lack such capacity: programmes are implemented on a limited scale and/or remain at the pilot stage and often require sustained support from external donors. Moreover, to ensure their sustainability, social transfer programmes should be backed by sound macroeconomic and fiscal policies. Their success will also depend on the adequate provision of basic social services, especially for the most vulnerable families and individuals.

[2] "Effects of non-contributory social transfers in developing countries: A compendium". Working paper (ILO, May 2010).

[3] A. Cigno, F. C. Rosati and Z. Tzannatos, *Child Labour Handbook*, Social Protection Discussion Paper Series No. 0206 (World Bank, 2002).

B. Promoting intergenerational solidarity

23. Intergenerational solidarity mostly relates to reciprocal care, support and exchange of material and non-material resources between family members, typically younger and older generations. The demographic transition, changes in family structures and living arrangements as well as migration often negatively impact intergenerational relations and solidarity.

24. Multigenerational families, with strong ties based on intergenerational support and reliance, although still common in many parts of the world, are rapidly declining in numbers. Families are becoming smaller and more diverse, many young people postpone marriage, more stay single or divorce, and many live longer with their parents. All those developments pose new demands on family members and test the traditional grandparent-parent-youth relationships. Such trends, combined with the fact that many countries are ill-equipped to address their effects, also indicate that intergenerational dependence between the younger and older family members may grow stronger.

25. Young people need special support in their transition to adulthood. For many, it is increasingly difficult to find gainful employment, afford independent housing and start their own families. Patterns of leaving parental homes are also evolving and are affected by changing structures of the labour and housing markets, changing patterns of family formation and expansion in education and training opportunities. Young people need affordable housing allowing them geographical mobility to respond to education, training and employment opportunities. Lack of affordable housing and limited prospects for income-generating activities may also force young people to forgo their educational and training opportunities and prolong their stay in the parental home. Transition to responsible adulthood may be postponed and reliance on the older generation, especially in terms of housing provision and income-support, increases.

26. According to survey research in developed and developing countries, despite social and economic changes, family bonds remain strong and family members assist one another through financial support and care. In both developed and developing countries, older people, especially the younger-old, are more likely to provide financial support to younger family members than they are to receive it, even though there may be a perception that younger generations are faced with the burden of taking care of the older ones (see A/65/157, paras. 48 and 49). The Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) reports that over half of grandmothers and nearly half of grandfathers — 58 and 49 per cent, respectively — provided some care for a grandchild on a regular basis. In southern Europe, where co-residence is more prevalent, grandparents provide the greatest amount of care to their grandchildren. On the other hand, research also demonstrates that fewer and fewer parents expect their children to take care of them in their old age.

27. Social protection schemes have been found to promote intergenerational solidarity. Examples from South Africa and Namibia show that grandparents use their non-contributory social pensions to cover their grandchildren's school fees.[4] Evidence from social pension schemes in Lesotho and Namibia indicates that

[4] Stephen Devereux, *Social Pensions in Namibia and South Africa* (Institute of Development Studies Discussion Paper 379 (February 2001)).

elderly people have improved their financial self-reliance and hence their status within the household. Social pensions can thus play an important role in restoring dignity and conferring recognition to elderly people.[5]

28. Community programmes and the promotion of intergenerational communication at work are good steps towards better intergenerational relations. Policies aimed at reconciling work and family life and eliminating age-related barriers in the workplace may also contribute to improved intergenerational relations at the family, community and society levels.

29. Examples from several countries of concrete measures aimed at strengthening intergenerational solidarity include the training of younger employees by experienced workers and the assurance of young peoples' participation in poverty eradication, employment creation and social integration programmes. In Australia, intergenerational exchange programmes have been found to help younger and older persons to build very concrete, and often highly specialized, skills, find work and expand career opportunities. Benefits to the broader community include the building, maintenance and revitalization of public infrastructure.[6]

30. School-based intergenerational programmes involve obligatory community service, requiring young people, typically high school students, to help older persons in their day-to-day activities. They can also include mentoring programmes, where older persons volunteer to help children and young people with their schoolwork. The initial analysis of 133 intergenerational programmes in Spain found that, on an individual level, these programmes appear to improve self-confidence, self-esteem and perceived health, facilitating greater community integration and involvement.[7]

31. Some programmes recognize that intergenerational approaches effectively address many priorities, such as: the building of active communities; the promotion of citizenship; and the regeneration of neighbourhoods as well as addressing inequality and social exclusion. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Manchester Generations Together programme, launched in 2009, connects people across generations to build understanding and respect. The programme challenges public agencies, businesses and communities to enable older persons' participation in the plans for the regeneration of the city. One of its projects develops skills sharing through a school volunteering programme, and another helps younger and older people to start social and non-profit enterprises together.[8]

32. In some countries, family-oriented support includes cash benefits for family members who care for older family members. The "cash and counselling" programme run by Medicaid in the United States of America pays seniors directly to cover their in-home care. Cash can then be transferred to the family members who care for them. In South Africa, support is given to older caregivers, especially those

[5] International Labour Organization, "Effects of non-contributory social transfers in developing countries: A compendium". Working paper (May 2010), p. x.

[6] J. MacCallum and others, "Community Building through Intergenerational Exchange Programs: Report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme" (Canberra, 2006).

[7] Mariano Sanchez and others, "Intergenerational programmes: towards a society for all ages" (Social Studies Collection No. 23, 2007).

[8] Family Platform Online Journal, vol. 2: Solidarities in Contemporary Families. Available from http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/home/publications/journal-volume-2-solidarities-in-contemporary-families.

caring for children and youth with HIV/AIDS. These types of programmes help families to overcome the burden of care and strengthen family ties. It should be noted, however, that the evaluation of intergenerational programmes has been mostly qualitative, incorporating interviews and focus groups, with limited quantitative evaluation of their effectiveness having been undertaken so far.

C. Reconciling work and family life

33. Equality and equity in opportunities, access to resources and equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women as well as respect for the rights of all family members are essential for both the well-being of the family and that of the society at large.

34. Families find it more and more difficult to reconcile the competing necessities of their work and family obligations. The burden of care quasi-universally placed on women tends to significantly limit their access to employment and social participation. Whereas, today, both women and men are engaged in gainful employment, the domestic workload still remains the responsibility of women for the most part, a fact that remains largely unaddressed in the context of both legal and social policy frameworks. Comprehensive legal and policy frameworks balancing work and family life should be established to allow for shared care responsibilities between men and women, other family members, the State, the private sector and society as a whole.

35. Policy interventions aimed at facilitating better balancing of work and family life range from parental leave to child benefits and access to affordable childcare. However, most measures are accessible only to women employed in the formal sector, excluding all those working in informal jobs. Also, even when provisions exist, experience shows that they may not be implemented.

36. An assessment of parental leave policies in 21 developed countries indicates that total protected job leave available to couples varies widely from 14 weeks in Switzerland to over 300 weeks in France and Spain. Most countries provide between three months and one year of full-time equivalent paid leave. The review noted that the Nordic countries of Finland, Norway and Sweden offered the best policies in terms of both generosity and gender equality outcomes.[9]

37. In the European Union, work-life balance policies often focus on the increased female labour market participation and a more egalitarian division of labour at home. The provision of quality childcare is considered a preferred policy option to help parents to reconcile work and family life. At the Barcelona Summit in 2002, the European Council set concrete targets of providing childcare by 2010 to at least 90 per cent of children between 3 years of age and the mandatory school age and at least 33 per cent of children under 3 years of age. Eurostat data indicate that the use of formal childcare arrangements varies from 73 per cent in Denmark to 2 per cent in the Czech Republic and Poland, and 7 States members of the European Union (EU) have already met the Barcelona targets. It is expected that childcare will

[9] R. Ray, J. C. Gornick and J. Smitt, "Parental Leave Policies in 21 Countries: assessing Generosity and Gender Equality", Center for Economic and Policy Research (Washington, D.C., September 2008).

remain central to social care policy in EU since it is related to the needs of the economy, the labour market and gender equality policy.

38. While specific policies provide incentives towards changing the perception that men's work is worth more than women's and that caring is the sole responsibility of women, stereotypes remain entrenched and much more needs to be done. Society should recognize the equal value of both types of work and strengthen families to fulfil this role. Such transformation would ensure that caregiving responsibility is shared between men and women with society at large, including the responsibility of the State and markets.[10] In essence, both men and women have a right to paid employment without being forced to neglect their family responsibilities.

39. Yet, behaviour and perception are slowly changing. Fathers are no longer solely regarded as breadwinners but increasingly as full partners in co-parenting. These new expectations are, inter alia, due to the rise in women's professional and educational status and the corresponding increase in the importance of their earnings and new demands on their professional careers. In response to these trends, new "father-sensitive" policies, such as statutory paternal leave and flexible working provisions, facilitating the increased role of men in caregiving, have been adopted in several countries, particularly in Europe. Findings show that fathers are most likely to take paternity leave when it is longer than 14 days and offers income replacement of 50 per cent or more.[11]

D. Collecting national and regional data on family well-being

40. Evidence-based policymaking rests on the availability of reliable data on family well-being. Data illustrating the situation of families and challenges they face are needed to inform and stimulate a debate over explicit family policy and its impact as well as to identify the most vulnerable families in need of immediate assistance.

41. The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development has recently launched a Global State of the Family Index.[12] The database includes indicators of family well-being such as infant and maternal mortality, marriage and divorce, educational attainment and other quantitative indicators relevant to the family. The data can be mapped geographically by countries, with timeline tables available to compare the indicators in different countries and regions over time. The database also allows for animation of many indicators, making for a better illustration of trends.

42. The Research Division of the European Commission has carried out a Family Platform project. The project has critically reviewed existing research on the family in Europe. The final report of this project, to conclude in 2011, will serve as the research agenda and basis for the European Union family policies road map 2012-2013 and will address issues such as: gender equality at work and at home,

[10] International Labour Organization and United Nations Development Programme, "Work and Family: towards new forms of reconciliation with social co-responsibility" (2009).

[11] Margaret O'Brien, "Fathers, Parental Leave Policies and Infant Quality of Life", International Perspectives and Policy Impact", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (2009), vol. 624, No. 1, pp. 190-213.

[12] Available from http://globalfamilyindex.org.qa/.

reconciliation of work and family life, care of family members over the life course, intergenerational solidarity, and immigrant families and their integration in host countries. The project aims to answer the question of how European policies and the States members of EU can improve the well-being of families in the long term.[13]

43. One of the major conclusions of the research carried out so far is that family policy in Europe should focus on the rising number of lone-parent families who are most at risk of poverty. Another area of concern is the fact that women continue to assume a remarkably bigger share of domestic work even in dual-earner families, and the division of paid and especially unpaid work continues to be gendered and particularly resistant to policy interventions. Even though EU policy is "father-sensitive", encouraging men's caring role and fatherhood, a division of gender roles prevails with women providing the bulk of domestic work. Current research also demonstrates the new role of grandparents in financial support of their children and caring for their grandchildren.[14]

III. Preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

A. Review of family-related provisions of human rights instruments and outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits

44. International focus on the family stems from the mandate of the International Year of the Family observed in 1994. One of the objectives of the Year is to build upon the results of international activities concerning individual family members as well as other major events of concern to the family or its individual members.

45. In addition, numerous General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 64/133 on the follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond, noted that "the family-related provisions of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s and their follow-up processes continue to provide policy guidance on ways to strengthen family-centred components of policies and programmes as part of an integrated comprehensive approach to development". The review below highlights the most important issues pertaining to family as contained in those frameworks.

1. Human rights instruments

46. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms in article 16 that the family, as the fundamental group unit of society, is entitled to protection by society and the State (General Assembly resolution 217 A (III)). This is echoed by article 10 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 23 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex). Human rights law upholds the right of people to marry and form a family, and the right of children to a family. As the family can be vulnerable to social, economic and political pressure, human rights law also seeks to

[13] See http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/home.

[14] Family Platform, "Research on Families and Family Policies in Europe: State of the Art". Final report 15 September 2010.

support the family by stipulating State obligations to keep families together and reunify them in case of separation.

47. Gender equality and the importance of ensuring work and family balance is the focus of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Convention is especially relevant when it comes to discrimination and unequal treatment of women and their status in the family, setting provisions for equal rights and responsibilities within a family. Enabling parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life is also emphasized (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex, articles 5, 11 and 16).

48. Human rights instruments also lay down standards for the treatment of children lacking parental care and oblige States to provide for foster care or adoption. Equal rights and responsibilities of men and women at marriage, during the marriage and at its dissolution are also upheld, as are the rights of children to parental care and being free from abuse. The Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that the family, as the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community (General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex, fifth preambular paragraph). Parents have the most important role in the bringing up of children and are encouraged to deal with rights issues with their children "in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child" (ibid., article 5). The Convention addresses children's rights from a child's perspective and urges adherence to the best interest of the child, focusing on survival and developmental, protection and participation rights.

49. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates that persons with disabilities and their family members should receive the necessary protection and assistance to enable families to contribute towards the full and equal enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities (General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I, preambular paragraph (x)).

50. In the context of human rights, it is important to acknowledge that there are still families, as there are individuals and communities, that enforce customs endangering the situation of women, perpetrate violence against women and children, and seek to dominate those who are weaker and defenceless. Older family members as well as those with disabilities may fall victim to neglect and abuse within their own families as well. That is why the authority of the family is limited by the human rights of its individual members.

2. Major United Nations conferences, summits and instruments

51. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994 contains family-relevant policy recommendations in the areas of housing, work, health, social security and education, including parenting. The Programme of Action also notes that it is important to develop the capacity to monitor the impact of social and economic decisions and actions on the well-being of families, on the status of women within families, and on the ability of families to meet the basic needs of their members. Families in vulnerable situations are in need of particular assistance. Such families include single-parent families headed by women, refugee and displaced families, those where family members are affected by HIV/AIDS, substance dependence, child abuse and domestic violence as well as

families living in poverty, families affected by war, drought, natural disasters, discrimination or violence. Governments are encouraged to support and develop appropriate mechanisms to assist families caring for children, their older members and family members with disabilities and support the viability of multigenerational families.[15]

52. The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted by the General Assembly in 1995, emphasizes the increasing difficulty for young people to receive family life education as a basis for forming healthy families that foster sharing of responsibilities (resolution 50/81, annex, para. 6 (f)). It also notes that youth unemployment deprives young people of the opportunity to secure independent housing necessary to establish families (ibid., para. 34). The Supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond observes that trends in globalization and development have resulted in situations where many young people are cut off from their families (General Assembly resolution 62/126, annex, para. 54). It also calls for programmes to strengthen families and to foster intergenerational relations (ibid., para. 58).

53. Women's role in families is underscored by the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995, which noted that women's literacy was an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society.[16] Reconciling work and family responsibilities takes up a large share of recommendations on family well-being, e.g., policies should facilitate the restructuring of work patterns to promote the sharing of family responsibilities and promote career development based on work conditions that harmonize work and family responsibilities.

54. The Habitat Agenda adopted at the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul in 1996, commits Governments to encouraging social and economic policies "designed to meet the housing needs of families and their individual members, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members, with particular attention to the care of children."[17]

55. The World Summit for Social Development, 1995, recognized the family as the basic unit of society and acknowledged its key role in social development. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development acknowledged that the family should be strengthened, with attention to the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of its members. It also noted that the family is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support and that "in different cultural, political and social systems various forms of family exist".[18] Member States also commit themselves to provide the family with an environment that ensures its protection and support.[19]

56. The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development recognizes the critical contribution of families to social integration. Mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation, as well as equal partnership between women and men in the family, are critical to the respect of these values in the society at large. It is,

[15] A/CONF.171/13/Rev.1, paras. 5.9, 5.7, 5.12 and 5.11.
[16] A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1, para. 69.
[17] A/CONF.165/14, para. 40 (k).
[18] A/CONF.166/9, para. 26 (h).
[19] Ibid., Commitment 4 (k).

therefore, important to ensure opportunities for family members to understand and meet their social responsibilities within the family and within society. Consequently, social and economic policies should be designed with a view to meeting the needs of families and their individual members, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members, with particular attention to the care of children.[20]

57. At its twenty-fourth special session, which marked the fifth anniversary of the World Summit on Social Development, the General Assembly further observed that "greater attention should be paid to helping the family in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles, to the causes and consequences of family disintegration, and to the adoption of measures to reconcile work and family life for women and men" (General Assembly resolution S/24/2, para. 56). It also recognized the importance of promoting appropriate action to meet the needs of families, especially in the areas of economic support and provision of social services.

58. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, noted that families were important to promote reciprocity, intergenerational solidarity and interdependence. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring conditions that enabled families to provide care and protection to persons as they age through family-friendly and gender-sensitive policies aimed at reconciling work and caregiving responsibilities. The Plan of Action also expressed a growing concern that a lack of family-friendly policy regarding the organization of work could increase difficulties relating to family care obligations and the ability of women to build pensions and other resources for their retirement.[21]

59. In addition to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, it is also pertinent to note the International Labour Organization's instruments recognizing workers with families. Its Convention on Workers with Family Responsibilities argues that the absence of effective measures for reconciling work and family responsibilities compromised development. It also called upon States to create national policies that enable workers with families to engage in employment without risking discrimination and take measures to develop or promote community services, public or private, such as childcare and family services and facilities, thus enabling parents to engage in employment.[22] The Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families requires States Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of the unity of the families of migrant workers and facilitate their reunification (General Assembly resolution 45/158, article 44).

60. This brief overview demonstrates that the concern over the well-being of families is a tangible element of the outcomes of major conferences and summits. The international community clearly recognizes that, as a basic unit of society, the family plays a key role in social development and deserves protection and assistance to fulfil its multiple roles. Existing instruments do provide a series of guidelines on the types of policies needed to empower families.

[20] Ibid., para. 81.

[21] A/CONF.197/9, paras. 28 (i) and 25.

[22] International Labour Organization Convention No. 156, Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981, articles 4 and 5.

3. General Assembly resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General on the family

61. The General Assembly resolutions focusing on the family since the proclamation of the International Year of the Family in 1989 have dealt with a wide range of issues relevant to the well-being of families around the world. Governments were encouraged to mainstream family policy into their overall policymaking, build on the provisions of family-related international activities, and take special measures to increase the well-being of families.

62. Similarly, the Secretary-General's reports guided national, regional and international efforts for the implementation of those resolutions. Most recently the attention of the international community focused on some specific aspects of family policy, including integrating a family perspective into the promotion of social protection and investing in intergenerational solidarity within families and communities. Further exploration of these issues and their interconnectedness is warranted, especially now, when the effects of the current economic crisis point to the relevance of social protection and intergenerational solidarity as coping strategies.

B. Proposed framework for the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

63. The General Assembly, in its resolution 59/111 of 6 December 2004, decided to celebrate the anniversary of the International Year of the Family on a 10-year basis. Thus the international community can take stock of family issues at regular intervals and keep the focus on the family on the international agenda.

64. On the basis of the overall objectives of the International Year of the Family, family-oriented components of the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits highlighted above, as well as general guidance provided by the General Assembly resolutions focusing on the family and the reports of the Secretary-General in response to those resolutions, a framework for the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary emerges.

1. Objectives of the International Year of the Family, 1994

65. The overall objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up process continue to guide national and international efforts to benefit families worldwide: increasing awareness of family issues among Governments and the private sector; strengthening the capacity of national institutions in family policymaking; stimulating efforts to respond to problems affecting families; undertaking reviews and assessments of the situation and needs of families; enhancing effectiveness of current and new programmes; improving collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations in support of families; and building upon the results of international activities of concern to the family or its individual members.

66. Raising awareness of family issues will continue to be a major priority for the years to come. It may involve efforts to highlight the importance of family functions, such as socialization of children and caring for young and old family members, as well as the role of families in development and their contribution to building socially integrated societies.

67. Strengthening the national institutional capacity to design, implement, monitor and assess comprehensive and coherent family policies encompasses both the training of policymakers and practitioners and the creation and development of dedicated administrative units within relevant ministries. Sharing of experiences among countries in this area will be very beneficial.

68. Scaling up efforts in response to specific problems affecting families may entail providing better access to education, health services and housing, especially for families in vulnerable situations. Innovative ways of responding to the needs of families could be showcased and good practices shared.

69. Strengthening partnership with civil society organizations is critical to both securing a family perspective in policymaking and programme implementation as well as raising awareness of family issues.

70. National policymaking should be continually guided by duties and obligations pledged at the international forum. All these major objectives remain valid and should continue to guide the national, regional and international preparations for the twentieth anniversary.

2. Tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

71. The preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004 focused on the approaches to family policy development; technology and its impact on the family; parental roles and intrafamilial support systems; statistics and indicators for family well-being and HIV/AIDS and its impact on families. Those issues were discussed at several meetings leading to the tenth anniversary, and were the subject of several publications prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.

72. For the twentieth anniversary it would be advisable to continue focusing on family policy development and sharing of experiences and information.

3. Proposed themes for the twentieth anniversary

73. The importance of the family in social development deserves to be placed high on the agenda of the Commission for Social Development, especially as it relates to the achievement of the three pillars of the Copenhagen Conference: reduction of poverty, full employment and decent work and social integration. To that end the following major themes — the importance of which was highlighted in section II of the report — are proposed to guide the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary:

(a) Confronting family poverty and social exclusion;

(b) Ensuring work-family balance;

(c) Advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity within families and the communities.

C. Preparations at the international level

74. The annual observance of the International Day of Families helps to raise awareness of family issues and stimulate efforts to respond to challenges faced by

families. The 2010 observance focused on "The impact of migration on families around the world". It was particularly relevant to the plight of migrant families facing prolonged separation, economic hardship and discrimination in the countries of destination.

75. The observances of the International Day of Families from 2011 to 2013 could centre on the themes established for the twentieth anniversary as follows: 2011: Confronting family poverty and social exclusion; 2012: Ensuring work and family balance; and 2013: Advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity. The celebration of the International Day of Families in May 2014 will address the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and focus on progress and challenges ahead.

76. The upcoming sessions of the Commission for Social Development and family-focused side events will offer an opportunity to raise awareness of family issues, assess family policies and highlight the activities for the twentieth anniversary. Governments will also be asked to share good practices in promoting the well-being of families in the three areas noted above and showcase their national efforts to implement family-focused policies and programmes. Depending on the support of Member States, an observance commemorating the twentieth anniversary could be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in the autumn of 2014.

D. Preparations at the regional level

77. The upcoming anniversary of the International Year of the Family presents an opportunity to draw attention to challenges faced by families in different parts of the world. Appropriate preparations at regional and subregional levels would help to assess and review the situation of families in the regions, encourage greater efforts at regional data collection and stimulate an exchange of good practices in family policymaking.

78. Accordingly, it would be advisable to hold regional meetings focusing on the themes for the twentieth anniversary. Such regional gatherings could review the progress towards the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and draw attention to the issues of concern to the regions. The meetings would be attended by various stakeholders, including Government representatives, policymakers, United Nations agencies and bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, research and academic institutions and the private sector.

79. With the support of Member States, regional partners and non-governmental organizations as well as academic institutions, regional meetings could be convened under their sponsorship. The United Nations Programme on the Family stands ready to assist in the preparations for regional meetings and dissemination of their findings and recommendations.

80. Each regional meeting would focus on the themes for the twentieth anniversary and issues of concern to the region. Specific policies, programmes and good practices would be showcased. At the conclusion of each meeting, a report summarizing the findings, highlighting policies supporting the well-being of families and making recommendations on the best ways to further advance it will be

published. Possible ways of strengthening regional and international cooperation could also be discussed.

81. In 2014 an international conference may be convened to present the findings and recommendations from regional meetings. The final recommendations of the conference could be used to guide efforts of the international community to strengthen families and ensure that they are the focus of development efforts in the years to come.

E. Preparations at the national level

82. Governments will be encouraged to plan, coordinate and carry out activities in support of the overall objectives of the International Year of the Family and the priority themes of the twentieth anniversary.

83. Member States will be urged to develop appropriate policies to address family poverty and social exclusion, especially in families in the most vulnerable situations. Work-family balance policies, already high on the agenda of many Governments and international organizations, require closer scrutiny as to what policies are effective and where improvements should be made. The impact of family dynamics on social integration may be the most challenging issue to address and groundwork may have to be undertaken here.

84. Governments will be encouraged to review and assess their family policies as well as all policies that have a direct bearing on the well-being of families. Challenges faced in family policy design, implementation and monitoring and ways to overcome them should also be noted and lessons learned shared.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

85. The upcoming twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family obliges Member States to review the international commitments to the family expressed in human rights instruments and outcomes of major conferences and summits. It offers an unprecedented opportunity to place the family high on the development agenda and recognize that families should be a focus of social policy for the sake of present and future generations.

86. As recognized by the General Assembly in numerous resolutions, the family-oriented provisions of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the 1990s as well as their follow-up processes offer policy guidance on ways to strengthen family-centred components of family policies and programmes. Moreover, the outcomes of those conferences provide a framework for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and guide international efforts for their achievement.

87. The twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, coming on the eve of the target year of the Millennium Development Goals, gives us an opportunity to refocus on the role of families in development. The success of these endeavours will depend on the commitment of Member States to support the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up process.

88. The overall objectives of the twentieth anniversary need to focus on how best to support families in their functions, share good practices on family policies, review challenges faced by families and recommend solutions. Tangible support for families on the part of the international community demonstrates its commitment to the goals of social development, including social cohesion and solidarity between generations.

89. The following recommendations are proposed for consideration by the Commission for Social Development:

(a) The Commission could review the proposals contained in the present report on the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and recommend appropriate actions to be undertaken to that effect at the national, regional and international levels;

(b) The Commission may consider supporting the following major themes to guide the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in line with the three pillars of the Copenhagen Conference:

(i) Poverty eradication: confronting family poverty and social exclusion;

(ii) Full employment and decent work: ensuring work-family balance;

(iii) Social integration: advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity within families and communities;

(c) The Commission may consider requesting Governments to report on their national activities in support of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family;

(d) Governments, United Nations agencies and bodies, civil society organizations and academic institutions should share good practices and data in the area of family-oriented policy development, implementation and monitoring and family well-being;

(e) Governments, United Nations agencies and bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, research and academic institutions and the private sector should be encouraged to play a supportive role in promoting the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its twentieth anniversary.